

VZCZCXYZ0007
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHNY #0270 1351013
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 141013Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY OSLO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6790
INFO RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1331

UNCLAS OSLO 000270

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

EUR/NB (MMCDOWELL)

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [NO](#)
SUBJECT: NORWAY AND HEALTH CARE WORKER MIGRATION

REF: STATE 49980

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The GON has not yet passed any domestic legislation on health care migration (Note: Domestic legislation concerning such migration has, to our knowledge, also not been rejected by the Norwegian parliament, the Storting). Along with potential domestic legislation, Norway has also pledged to assist in the development of international standards, known as the Code of Practice (COP). The issue of health care worker migration received widespread attention last year, with the public widely criticizing a measure seen as promoting a brain drain from developing countries. The reaction to that proposal has prompted recent GON reports, and pending legislation, concerned with addressing such development assistance.

¶2. (SBU) Care worker migration became a politically charged issue in 2007, after International Development Minister Eric Solheim's support of a proposed health care worker program. The issue gained widespread public attention following a visit to Malawi by Christian Democrat leader Dagfinn Hoybraaten, who was opposed to the initiative with fears that it would precipitate a brain drain in the developing country: foreign workers, trained in the medical services industry, would spend time practicing in Norway, where such workers are in sore demand.

¶3. (SBU) Public outcry followed. The ensuing ethical debate, which largely attacked the program, questioned why the GON would use public development funds to train the workers if the gained skills and competence would not revert to the communities needing them. One daily likened the program to a child stealing apples from a neighbor. NGOs, including Change Maker, remain involved in this issue, alleging that the initiative would remove opportunities from developing countries--the same nations supposedly targeted for improvement by the program. An immigration debate also grew, insofar that the GON was accused of cherry-picking workers from select countries--thus assisting some, and not others.

¶4. (SBU) The Ministry of Health was tasked with developing a report to address the controversy, which was released in August 2007. The Report proposed actions in three areas to reduce factors "pushing" health care workers out of their home countries and pulling them to "certain developed countries." The report advocates that a better balance be found in Norway between the need for health workers and supply of health workers. Secondly, a larger portion of domestic assistance to developing countries should be targeted at measures increasing the receiving countries capacity to train health workers, but also conditions for those already employed in the sector. Finally, the report concludes that it is not a realistic expectation, or goal, to expect a "full stop" to the migration of health workers from developing countries.

15. (SBU) The Ministry of Labor and Social Inclusion recently released a White Paper, which announced a need to develop national and international standards to "limit the brain drain" from developing countries. In a recent press release, the Ministry calls for cooperation with the E.U. within the areas of migration and development, and contribution of international standards to prevent the active recruitment of workers with higher education and skills--which the developing nations are in need of. The GON will also develop national guidelines, and subsequently advocate for international standards.

16. (SBU) The Storting has not yet passed any legislation on this matter, but the recent Labor Ministry report indicates that it must first develop a domestic program before embracing an international regime. The proposal has been in the Storting since May 7th, with a goal as to moving any potential legislation forward by June 10th.
WHITNEY